

Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

Minister says first priority is to cut spending

Steve Webb, the new pensions' minister, has revealed the main aim of his job is not to improve the pension system, but to see where it can be cut, the NPC can reveal.

In his first meeting with the Convention, Mr Webb said whilst he shared the NPC's aim of raising the basic state pension and reducing the need for means-testing, the current economic climate meant that this was impossible.

However, when asked to produce a plan showing how the state pension could be systematically increased to the official poverty level - the minister

promised that a new green paper on the future of the state pension would be published in about a year's time.

Mr Webb also stated that the government intended to reduce the annual winter fuel payment next year to its 2008 level.

This would mean cutting the £250 for households under 80 to £200 and reducing the over 80s payment from £400 to £300.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "The new minister clearly sees his job as being a gate-keeper for the Treasury, rather than the voice of pensioners inside government."

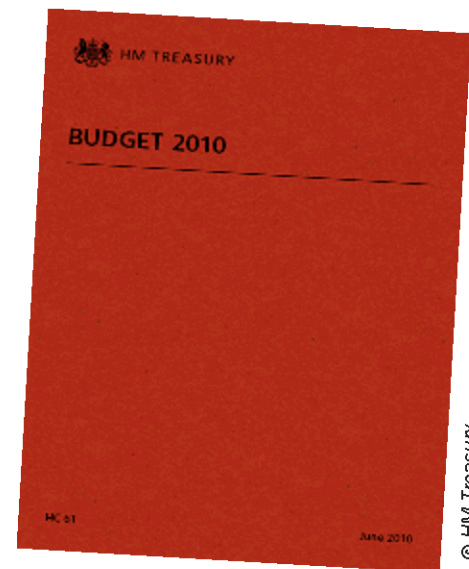
Notes of this meeting are available at npcuk.org

Budget brings misery to millions

On June 22, the Chancellor George Osborne delivered his Emergency Budget and told pensioners they would have to endure years of economic pain in order to pay for the crisis caused by the financial sector.

Even the proposal to restore the link with earnings and prices turned out to be less generous than originally thought, with prices being measured after 2011 by the lower Consumer Price Index.

The Autumn



The Budget signals the first attempt at cutting welfare and public spending. A detailed briefing on the Budget is available at npcuk.org

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spending review on October 20 is also likely to include a cut to the winter fuel allowance.

Dot Gibson, NPC

general secretary said: "The Budget will spell misery for millions of older people and we must start the fight back now."

Budget in Brief

- The basic state pension will rise by the greater of either inflation, earnings or 2.5%
- SERPS, Graduated Pension and public sector pensions will rise in line with the Consumer Price Index
- VAT will rise from 17.5% to 20% in January 2011
- Housing benefit will be capped at £290 a week or two bedrooms
- Personal tax allowances for the over 65s remain frozen
- Council tax frozen for one year for low spending areas
- House, car and pet insurance to rise by 1%

National Pensioners Convention

19-23

Ironmonger Row,
London EC1V 3QN
T: 020-7553-6510
www.npcuk.org



Campaign Dates

NPC Regional Meetings

During 2010 the NPC will be staging a series of open meetings in every region of the UK. Details will be available shortly on at npcuk.org

CSR Demo

20 October 2010

The NPC is leading a protest on College Green, Westminster at 12noon to protest against cuts in welfare and public spending expected to be announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review

NPC Lobby

27 October 2010

Theme: Higher Pensions and Better Care: Protest at 12 noon outside Parliament, Rally at 1-2pm, Westminster Central Hall followed by a lobby of MPs to be arranged. Please put this date in your diary. More details will follow shortly

IDS plans to raise retirement age

Iain Duncan Smith, the new secretary of state for Work and Pensions, has launched a three-month review aimed at 'reinvigorating retirement'.

Under the plans the state pension retirement age for men will rise to 66 in 2016, and by 2020 for women - at least eight years earlier than previously thought.

By 2046 the retirement age will have risen to 68,

but in a further move the government is now considering linking retirement to life expectancy so that the retirement age would continue to rise by 12 months every five years.

Critics argue that the proposal takes no account of the link between life expectancy and wealth - with people in the poorest areas of the country living at least 10 years less than their better off counterparts.

Plans to force people to work longer also ignore the role pensioners currently play providing unpaid caring and voluntary work - all of which would be lost if they remained employed.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "There can be no doubt that the wealthier you are, the longer you live, so raising the retirement age therefore is a direct attack on the very poorest in our society."

Field to measure poverty

The Prime Minister has appointed Labour MP Frank Field to lead an independent review of poverty in the UK.

Mr Field will chair the review on Poverty and Life Chances which will report by the end of the year.

The main aim of the review will be to focus on how poverty is measured by looking at non-financial elements as well as income.

Critics are concerned that any attempt to re-define poverty may result in the figures

being massaged to reduce the overall

number classed as poor - in the same way as was done during the 1980s with the unemployment figures.

Syd Ashby, NPC vice president said: "1 in 4 older people currently live below the official poverty line and what we need is a decent state pension to tackle the problem."

Blackpool gets to grips with issues

Delegates at this year's Pensioners' Parliament were disappointed and angry that no minister from the new government was able to attend.

Despite this absence and the rain, over 1500 campaigners marched through the streets of Blackpool to a packed Winter Gardens for the opening session.

A Question Time-style panel includ-

ing the shadow pensions' minister, Angela Eagle, Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Ruth Marks, editor of Mature Times, Tony Watts and the NPC general secretary, Dot Gibson answered questions on issues from pensions and care to fuel poverty and free travel.

Over the next two days delegates also discussed issues as diverse as the

housing needs of older people and the challenges posed by an ageing society.

The Bachelors provided first class entertainment during the social evening and UNITE's deputy general secretary, Len McLuskey wound up proceedings with a call for workers and pensioners to campaign together.

A full report will be available shortly.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive this bulletin please send their email address to the NPC